

I Thessalonians

Who wrote I Thessalonians? Paul, Timothy, and Silvanus (Silas' Latin name as a Roman citizen).

When was Paul in Thessalonica? Paul visited the city on his second missionary journey about 50-51 AD (see Acts 17). He preached for only about 3 weeks before he was forced to leave. Paul was accused of sedition against Caesar because he proclaimed a new "King." After he left Thessalonica, his enemies pointed out that he had fled in the night and derided his message because of it. He was concerned for the young church he had "planted" and so he sent Timothy back from Corinth to ascertain the church's health. He was pleased by the report, but sent additional counsel.

When was the letter written and from what location? The letter was written around 50-51 AD from (probably) Corinth⁶² or Athens⁶³. It was partly a letter of thanksgiving, friendship, praise; but also parenetic (how to behave) in nature. Here's a breakdown of the sections of the letter.

Introduction 1:1

Thanksgiving for Thessalonian's faith 1:2-10

Recap of Paul's ministry to Thessalonians 2:1-12

Nature and cost of the Thessalonians' reception 2:13-16

Paul's longing for his Thessalonian friends and Timothy's encouraging report 2:17-3:10

Paul's prayer 3:11-13

Living to please God and teaching regarding sexual purity 4:1-8

Behavior toward one another and outsiders 4:9-12

The (second) coming of the Lord and comfort for the grieving 4:13-18

Watchfulness and lifestyle 5:1-11

Paul's final instructions (in the letter) concerning how to behave among God's people (and toward church leaders) 5:12-22

Concluding words or benediction 5:23-28

What's the central message of the letter and what does I

Thessalonians say to us today? We are called to live a holy life (4:7), please God (4:1-2), live a quiet life (4:11) of restraint where we control our bodies (4:4), and love each other more and more (4:9-11). Live our daily life so we may win respect of non-Christians (4:11). Be sons (and daughters) of the light and put on "faith and hope as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as

⁶² *Holman New Testament Commentary: I & II Thessalonians, I & II Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, by Knute Larson (Max Anders, General Editor), Holman Reference, Nashville, TN, 2000, page 1.

⁶³ *The Holy Scriptures: Inspired Version*, by Joseph Smith Jr., Herald Publishing House, Independence, MO, 1974, page 1145.

a helmet” (5:8). Respect those who work hard among you, warn those who are idle, encourage those who are timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone, do not pay back “wrong for wrong,” be joyful, be kind to one another, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, do not put out the Spirit’s fire, test everything, hold on to the good, avoid every kind of evil (5:12-22). And finally remember verse 5:23-24, 28: “May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it.... The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”